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CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES
UNDER ARTICLE 44 OF THE CONVENTION

Initial reports of States parties due in 1997

QATAR

[29 October 1999]

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Introduction

1. The State of Qatar gained its independence in 1971 and became a member of the United Nations in September of the same year. Situated between latitudes 24° 27′ and 26° 10′ north and longitudes 50° 45′ and 51° 40′ east, Qatar lies midway along the western coast of the Arabian Gulf. A peninsula with a number of islands that extends northwards into the Gulf, it is some 160 kilometres in length from the south to the extreme north. Including the islands, it has a total area of 11,427 square kilometres.

2. Qatar adjoins the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the south and the United Arab Emirates in the south-west and is divided administratively into 10 municipalities: Doha, Rayyan, Wakrah, Umm Silal, Khur, Shamal, Ghuwairiyah, Jumailiyah, Jaryan Al-Batina and Umm Said. Its largest cities are Doha, the political capital, and Umm Said.

3. Qatar is generally characterized by a flat landscape, with the exception of some low hills to the north-west and a few scattered sandstone hills, the highest of which are the Dukhan heights, standing at 35 metres.

4. Qatar is also characterized by a hot summer lasting from June until mid-September and a warm winter with little rainfall lasting until the end of February.

5. Economically, the State is reliant on the production of oil and natural gas and the North Gas Field discovered in 1971 is one of the largest non-associated gas fields in the world. The State enjoys a good reputation in the structural industries such as iron, steel, petrochemicals, natural gas liquefaction, chemical fertilizers, cement and organic fertilizer, as well as in the food industry, furnishings, detergents, rubber and the processing industries, etc.

6. In 1997, the gross domestic product at current prices stood at 33,464 million Qatari riyals, total government revenues amounted to QR 13,516 million and overall expenditure reached QR 16,362 million, of which QR 711 million were spent on the Ministry of Public Health (including the Hamad Medical Foundation) and QR 1,118 million on the Ministry of Education.

7. According to the most recent census, conducted in March 1997, the population of Qatar stood at 526,427 persons, of whom 345,146 were male and 181,281 were female. Generally speaking, population growth has been based on the high growth witnessed in various aspects of the country's life and the attendant increase in demand for labour. This phenomenon, however, has not affected the educational and health services available to the population or any other service facilities.

8. In 1997, the total number of live births amounted to 10,447, of which 5,231 were males, 5,216 were females, 10,264 were hospital births and 6 were home births.

9. The total number of stillbirths was 55, of which 31 were males and 24 were females. There were 97 miscarriages, the cause of which was unknown in 60 cases.

10. The total number of deaths amounted to 1,060, of which 736 or 69.4 per cent were males and 324 or 30.6 per cent were females, attributable to the fact that males outnumber females.

11. There were 128 infant deaths, representing 12.1 per cent of all deaths. The mortality distribution pattern is consistent with the standard international pattern, with the exception of some individuals in the under-20 age group, possibly due to misreporting of the age of the deceased.

12. According to the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems produced by the World Health Organization (WHO), in which causes of death are coded and classified, over one third of deaths (34.6 per cent) occurred as a result of diseases of the circulatory system and 16 per cent occurred as a result of accident or injury. Tumours were the third major cause of death (12.5 per cent) and in 5 per cent of cases the cause of death was unspecified. Specific perinatal conditions were the cause in 5.2 per cent of all deaths.

13. In the period 1988-1997, only one case of maternal mortality occurred in each of the years 1994, 1996 and 1997.

14. We shall now turn our attention to the efforts exerted by the State of Qatar in its endeavours to ensure respect for, and compliance with, the rights provided for in the Convention.

I. GENERAL IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

Article 4

15. The State of Qatar is diligently taking every measure to guarantee the economic and social rights of the child to the maximum extent permitted by the resources available to it in this connection. In this respect, we refer to Qatar's resolute determination to provide an information network on children in order to collate scattered indicators with a view to addressing all the fields covered by the Convention. The State has begun taking initial steps to establish a comprehensive information systems network and provide the mechanisms required for regular monitoring of the situation of all categories of children, turning for assistance to the United Nations in order to obtain the necessary technical advice from its experts.

Article 42

16. In accordance with the provisions of article 42 of the Convention, Qatar has circulated the text of the Convention to all the ministries and government departments responsible for safeguarding the rights of the child, and particularly to the Supreme Council for Family Affairs.

17. Although the provisions of the Convention have not yet been incorporated in the school curricula, the Ministry of Education encourages their dissemination through festivities held in schools and on the occasions of Mother's Day and Children's Day, as well as on other special occasions such as United Nations Day and the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

18. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Supreme Council for Family Affairs also send a number of their staff to attend the courses organized by the regional offices of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for training in preparation of the reports to be submitted to the Committee on the Rights of the Child pursuant to the Convention.

Article 44

19. A copy of this report was circulated for comment to all government authorities concerned with maternal and child affairs. Copies were also circulated to all voluntary organizations operating in the field of the rights of the child.

II. DEFINITION OF THE CHILD

Article 1

20. Qatar's legislation defines the child as any person below the age of 18 years and is therefore consistent with the provisions of the Convention.

21. The Penal Code sets the age of criminal responsibility as follows:

1. There shall be no criminal responsibility for any act perpetrated by a minor under seven years of age;

2. If the minor is over seven but under 18 years of age, he shall not be held criminally responsible unless he is sufficiently mature in awareness to judge the nature or consequences of the act which he perpetrates.

The Penal Code makes no distinction between girls and boys in regard to the age of criminal responsibility.

III. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Article 2

22. Children in Qatar enjoy the rights set forth in the Convention, without discrimination of any kind. There are no legislative acts which permit discrimination as to race, colour, sex, language, religion or other status. In fact, the official records of the State authorities contain no complaints alleging discrimination on any ground. Qatar regards non-discrimination as an important principle of the Convention and is striving to formulate child-related policies on that basis.

Article 3

23. The principle stipulated in article 3, namely that the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration, is reflected in the Basic Law, equivalent to the Constitution, article 7 of

which provides that: "The family is the basis of society ... the law shall regulate the means to protect the family from all elements of vulnerability, consolidate its structure, strengthen its ties and safeguard mothers and children within its bosom."

24. The Basic Law also stipulates that the State shall cater for the welfare of the rising generation, safeguard it from the causes of corruption, protect it from exploitation and preserve it from the evils of physical and spiritual neglect.

25. The State is making every effort to promulgate legislation, introduce regulations, create bodies with direct responsibility for the protection of children's rights (the Supreme Council for Family Affairs), establish the just society advocated in the Constitution and achieve the objective sought by the principle set forth in article 3.

26. The State has devoted attention to improving the situation of children, particularly those belonging to the vulnerable segment of society, including the disabled. Accordingly, it has established a special association for the welfare of the disabled, which is conducting a comprehensive survey of the cases of disability in the country and classifying them scientifically in collaboration with ministries and the competent government authorities so that it can consult with them on all matters concerning the social integration of disabled persons, the provision of facilities for them and the organization of training to enable them to engage in useful activities. It has promulgated legislative acts which exempt disabled persons from some of the dues paid by able-bodied individuals. The Qatar Charitable Society offers social support to impoverished families, particularly those whose breadwinners are women.

27. As for the other vulnerable segments of society, such as victims of exploitation, including in the workplace, children born outside legal wedlock, children who are neglected or institutionalized and street children, the State has done its utmost to elaborate both the necessary legal frameworks for their protection and regulations for their care, where applicable.

Article 12

28. Qatar has attempted to implement the rights set forth in this article by promulgating legislative acts and adopting practical measures, including the following:

> Article 7 of the Juveniles Act No. 1 of 1994 provides that: "Any person who has not attained the age of seven full years shall not be held responsible for his acts."
>
> Article 32 of this Act provides: "A juvenile accused of a felony must have a lawyer. If he has not chosen a lawyer, the court shall appoint one for his defence, in which case the court shall assess the appropriate fees and pay them from the funds allocated for that purpose in the budget of the courts of justice. It shall, however, assume responsibility for collecting the sum from the juvenile in the event that he is in a position to make payment. If the juvenile is accused of perpetrating a misdemeanour, the appointment of a lawyer for his defence shall be at the discretion of the court."
>
> Article 33 of the same Act provides: "Before taking any decision concerning a juvenile subject to the provisions of this Act, the juvenile court shall examine the report of the

competent authority at the Ministry of the Interior and that of the probation officers in order to ascertain his physical, mental, psychological and social circumstances which might have led to his delinquency or risk of delinquency."

29. The customary practice in the religious courts in regard to child custody is that the court has the right to seek the child's opinion as to whether or not he wishes to remain in the custody of one of his parents. His opinion on this matter is taken into consideration.

30. In the field of education, the Ministry of Education endeavours to ensure that all schools at every stage of education have libraries stocked with thousands of books, as well as with legislative material and magazines, both new and old, and that schoolchildren have a full opportunity to read them freely. Library societies are also formed in schools, as are school press and radio societies which provide pupils with every opportunity to disseminate their views and opinions through wall magazines, printed publications or leaflets or via the school radio. In addition, the Ministry organizes cultural and information debates among pupils, as well as free and direct elections among the pupils in some schools, with the aim of encouraging them to express their views in complete freedom through elected student councils.

IV. CIVIL RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

Article 7

31. Qatar is pursuing its efforts to guarantee the rights set forth in article 7, as exemplified by the following:

Article 3 of the Births and Deaths Registration Act No. 5 of 1982 specifies the persons who are required to give notification of a birth;

Article 4 provides that "births in the State of Qatar must be notified to the competent health office within 15 days of the date of birth". The notification shall include the following information:

(a) The date of birth;

(b) The sex of the child (male or female), as well as the child's name and surname;

(c) The name, surname, nationality, religion, place of residence and occupation of both parents.

Article 7 provides that: "Any person who finds a newborn infant must take it to the nearest police station and file a report on the conditions and circumstances in which the infant was found, mentioning the place where it was found, the date and time, its approximate age, its sex (male or female), the condition in which it was found, its description and any distinguishing features. A name shall be chosen for the child, as well as two trinomial pseudonyms for its parents, and its religion shall be recorded as Muslim."

32. Failure to comply with the above provisions entails the imposition of a criminal penalty in accordance with article 26 of the Act, which stipulates: "Any person who contravenes the provisions of this Act shall be punished by a term of imprisonment of not less than one week and/or a fine of not less than 100 riyals and not more than 400 riyals."

33. Article 177 of the Penal Code further stipulates: "Any person who abducts a newborn infant, conceals it, replaces it with another or falsely attributes it to anyone other than its mother shall be punished by a term of imprisonment of not more than one year and/or a fine of not more than 1,000 riyals."

34. The child's right to nationality is regulated by the Qatari Nationality Act No. 2 of 1961, article 2 of which provides that "any person born in Qatar or abroad to a Qatari father shall be Qatari."

Article 8

35. In the context of article 8 of the Convention, the State has promulgated the legislation required to guarantee these rights. With regard to the care of foundlings, Act No. 16 of 1992 amended the provisions of the Births and Deaths Registration Act No. 5 of 1982 in such a way as to ensure that foundlings are regarded as having Qatari nationality.

36. In 1996, the Council of Ministers agreed to vest the Department of Social Affairs at the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs with authority to carry out the following functions:

> Open a file for every child comprising details of the child's foster family, developments in the child's situation and the extent to which the family is providing the child with adequate support;
>
> Establish conditions and general rules for prospective foster families and seek expert help in the quest for solutions to avert certain legal difficulties which might arise from fostering children after they attain a specific age.

37. On the basis of this decision, the Presidency of the Shari'a Courts issued Ruling No. 33 of 1418 A.H. (2 November 1997) laying down the following conditions for foster families:

(a) The family should hold Qatari nationality and reside permanently in Qatar;

(b) The family should consist of a husband and wife although, in exceptional cases, it may consist of a woman only, provided that she is an adult of sound mind and exemplary conduct who is capable of caring for and protecting the child;

(c) The foster mother should be over 25 years and under 50 years of age;

(d) The motive for fostering should not be to benefit from the financial assistance paid to children of unknown parentage;

(e) The foster family is required to enrol the child at a school when the child attains school age;

(f) The family's good conduct and its suitability to cater for the child's religious, social, psychological and economic welfare must be established on the basis of the research and inquiries carried out by the Department of Social Affairs in conjunction with the Ministry of the Interior;

(g) There should be no legal impediment to handing over the child to the prospective family.

38. The following table shows the numbers of illegitimate children and children of unknown parentage.

Year	Gender	Illegitimate	Unknown parentage	Total
1990	Male	4	4	8
1990	Female	5	1	6
1991	Male	7	8	15
1991	Female	9	2	11
1992	Male	4	1	5
1992	Female	2	1	3
1993	Male	5	5	10
1993	Female	3	3	6
1994	Male	8	2	10
1994	Female	8	2	10
1995	Male	4	5	9
1995	Female	5	1	6
1996	Male	7	3	10
1996	Female	8	3	11
1997	Male	5	3	8
1997	Female	3	1	4

39. Qatar has endeavoured to implement the provisions of this article in the light of the provisions of Islamic Shari'a law, which grant the right of custody to both parents or to either one of them if they are separated. Such custody or care may be withdrawn from both or from one of them only with the consent of the child and only after the child has attained a certain age.

40. The Civil Service Act also stipulates that a working mother must be granted maternity leave for a period of two months in order to care for her newborn child. The Supreme Council for Family Affairs is carefully considering the possibility of recommending to the Council of Ministers that maternity leave should be granted for a period of six months.

41. The Supreme Council for Family Affairs is also diligently formulating programmes and plans to increase family awareness of the consequences of relying on a children's nurse to bring up a Qatari child and is emphasizing the adverse effects of this trend. In addition, the Council is affirming its resolve to take every measure conducive to the social integration of disabled

children and foundlings, to provide them with a full opportunity for education and work and to take effective steps to ensure their acceptance in society. Ministerial ordinances have been promulgated under which nursing mothers are permitted to take one hour from their daily working hours in order to breastfeed. The welfare of children who have perpetrated an offence or contravention punishable under the laws and regulations in force is ensured through the stipulation that they must not be removed from their parents or from the person entitled to take care of them.

42. Article 10 of the Juveniles Act No. 1 of 1994 provides: "A juvenile shall be delivered into the custody of one of his parents or his natural or testamentary guardian. If neither is fit to provide him with a sound upbringing, he shall be handed over to a family member who is qualified to do so. If there is no such family member, he shall be handed over to a trustworthy person who must undertake to raise him and ensure his good conduct or to a reliable family whose provider makes such an undertaking."

Article 13

43. In accordance with article 13 of the Convention, the Qatari National Committee for Education, Culture and Science has sent a letter to head teachers of schools associated with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) encouraging them to give pupils the opportunity to express their opinions freely.

Article 14

44. With regard to the manner in which the rights set forth in article 14 of the Convention are guaranteed in Qatar, the provisions of the Islamic Shari'a determine the rights and duties of parents towards their children, which the Shari'a courts apply in connection with custody, maintenance, social welfare, discipline and other rights which guarantee a tranquil and happy life in which children are aware of their rights vis-à-vis their parents and parents are aware of their duties towards their children. The numerous judgements handed down by the Shari'a courts in that connection provide positive evidence of this.

45. With regard to protection of the financial rights of minors, Act No. 20 of 1996, concerning guardianship of the assets of minors and their equivalents, regulates the rights of parents and guardians in regard to the assets of a minor child.

46. With regard to article 14, paragraph 3, in the State of Qatar no child has ever been subjected to any form of persecution or arbitrary action by the State authorities for manifesting his or her religion or beliefs. Every child, whether Muslim or non-Muslim, has the right to express his or her religion and beliefs without fear of being harmed in any way by the State authorities, provided that such expression is within the limits of the law and the regulations, statutes and ordinances promulgated in this connection.

47. The legislation of Qatar makes provision for children to exercise their rights in a manner consistent with their evolving capacities, as required by the Islamic Shari'a and the stipulations contained in Act No. 20 of 1996, under which any person under 18 years of age is considered to be a minor whose financial dispositions are subject to control by the natural or testamentary

guardian. Article 36 of that Act further stipulates: "After hearing the opinion of the natural or testamentary guardian, the judge may grant a minor under 16 years of age absolute or limited permission to hand over some of his or her property for purposes of management or trading therein."

Article 15

48. The State has guaranteed exercise of the rights set forth in article 15 through the promulgation of a number of legislative instruments, including Act No. 18 of 1997, concerning the Qatari Scout and Girl Guide Association, article 2 of which stipulates that the Association shall be a body corporate with an independent budget attached to that of the Ministry. The Association, which is based in the city of Doha, supervises the Scout and Girl Guide Movement in the governmental and private sectors and, under the terms of article 3 of the Act, applies the general scouting and girl guide principles and regulations with due regard for the country's social, cultural and spiritual traditions.

49. Membership of the Association is regulated by article 8 of the Act, which stipulates that all scout and girl guide troops established by government and foreign schools, colleges, associations, organizations and institutions shall be subject to the provisions of the law and the rules and regulations issued by the Association in regard to supervision, registration and the award of scouting and girl guide licences and badges, etc.

50. The Ministry of Education issued Circular No. 140 of 1997 regulating the formation of school press and radio societies. It also issued Circular No. 117 of 1996 regulating school cooperative associations, which are known as school cafeteria groups.

Article 16

51. Qatari legislation shows due regard for the child's right to privacy, as provided for in article 16 of the Convention, as is clearly evident from the text of article 31 of the Juveniles Act No. 1 of 1994, which stipulates: "Juvenile trials shall be conducted in camera and may be attended only by the juvenile, his relatives, witnesses, lawyers, representatives of the competent authority in the Ministry of the Interior, probation officers and persons specially authorized by the court. The court may exempt the juvenile from appearing in person, allowing his parents, his natural or testamentary guardian or his custodian to appear on his behalf, provided that the trial is attended by the probation officer."

52. If necessary, the court may hear the case in the juvenile's absence but may under no circumstances convict the juvenile before explaining to him what has taken place during his absence.

Article 17

53. Article 17 of the Convention emphasizes the function performed by the mass media in regard to the rights of the child. In this respect, the State believes that the audio-visual information media play an extremely important role in ensuring the application of the principles and standards set forth in the Convention. In fact, children can use these media as a means of

expression. Qatar is diligently endeavouring to ensure that children enjoy access to information from all sources, provided that it is compatible with their mental, physical and moral well-being.

54. Every school has a school library containing the principal printed sources of knowledge for children, which the Ministry regularly expands and updates. The State, as well as cultural clubs, encourage authors to write more children's books in order to disseminate a love of learning among children.

55. In the educational field, the Ministry has issued Circulars Nos. 117 and 140, to which reference has already been made, in an attempt to enable children to acquire knowledge by some of the means specified in those circulars.

Article 37

56. Even before signing the Convention, the State of Qatar had guaranteed most, if not all, of the rights recognized in article 37 of the Convention, as exemplified by the promulgation of the Juveniles Act No. 1 of 1994, under the terms of which the rights of the child enjoy the effective protection required by the said article 37. The principal texts that have been promulgated to protect those rights are reviewed below.

57. With regard to the measures and penalties that can be imposed on juveniles, article 8 of the Juveniles Act No. 1 of 1994 defines the penalties that can be imposed on juveniles, which differ from those to which adults are liable. It stipulates: "A juvenile under 14 years of age who commits a felony or a misdemeanour shall not be sentenced to the penalties or measures prescribed for those offences but shall be liable only to one of the following measures:

(a) A reprimand;

(b) Delivery into the custody of a guardian;

(c) Enrolment for vocational training;

(d) Compulsory fulfilment of specific obligations;

(e) Judicial probation;

(f) Placement in a social reform institution;

(g) Placement in a health institution."

58. Articles 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15 of the Juveniles Act define the manner in which the measures and penalties imposed on juveniles should be carried out. These articles stipulate that any positive or negative change in the juvenile's behaviour must be taken into account as a basis for consideration of reduction or commutation of the penalty.

59. Article 18 of the Juveniles Act specifies the maximum penalties that can be imposed on juveniles in order to ensure that their liberty is restricted for the shortest possible period of time.

It stipulates: "The measures provided for in articles 10, 11, 12 and 13 shall be terminated three years from the date on which they take effect or when the juvenile reaches the age of 21, whichever is sooner. However, in cases involving felonies, after consulting the competent authority at the Ministry of the Interior, the convicted person may be placed on probation for a period not exceeding two years."

60. Imposition of capital punishment, life imprisonment, imprisonment with hard labour or flogging on a juvenile is prohibited by the Act, article 19 of which stipulates that: "A juvenile over 14 but under 16 years of age who commits a felony or a misdemeanour shall not be sentenced to capital punishment, imprisonment with hard labour or flogging but, instead, shall be liable to one of the following penalties: (a) a term of not more than 10 years' imprisonment for the commission of a felony punishable by death or life imprisonment; (b) half of the legally prescribed maximum penalty for the commission of an offence punishable by imprisonment and/or a fine."

61. In cases involving offences other than those punishable by death or life imprisonment, instead of the penalties prescribed in that article, the juvenile court may impose any of the measures, excluding reprimand and delivery into the custody of a guardian, provided for in article 8 of the Act.

62. In order to safeguard the interests of juveniles sentenced to penalties of imprisonment, such sentences are not served in prisons for adults but are served only in special governmental institutions, known as social reform centres, which accommodate and cater for the welfare, reform and rehabilitation of the juvenile delinquents placed therein by order of a juvenile court.

63. With a view to preserving the human dignity of children, article 20 of the Juveniles Act stipulates that sentences imposed on juveniles must not be entered in their criminal record and, moreover, the penalties prescribed in the Penal Code or any other legislation are not applicable to them.

64. In this connection, article 27 empowers a juvenile court to suspend all or part of the guardianship or custody rights granted by order of a competent authority in the following cases:

(a) If the guardian is sentenced, during his period of guardianship, to a term of imprisonment for a sexual offence or to 10 or more years' imprisonment for other offences;

(b) If the guardian endangers the juvenile's well-being or morals through ill-treatment or bad conduct;

(c) If the juvenile is placed in a social welfare centre in accordance with the provisions of the Act.

65. Under article 15 of the Juveniles Act, children deprived of their liberty have a guaranteed right to health care and are placed in a health institution if their condition necessitates medical care and treatment.

66. With regard to the child's right to a fair trial and to legal assistance, article 28 of the Juveniles Act stipulates: "The juvenile court shall be solely competent to hear the cases of juveniles accused of a felony or a misdemeanour or at risk of delinquency and to adjudicate in disputes concerning the enforcement of judgements handed down against them."

67. Juvenile offenders are entitled to legal assistance under the terms of article 32 of the Act, which stipulates: "A juvenile accused of a felony must have a lawyer. If he has not chosen a lawyer, the court shall appoint one for his defence, in which case the court shall assess the appropriate fees and pay them from the funds allocated for that purpose in the budget of the courts of justice. If the juvenile is accused of perpetrating a misdemeanour, the appointment of a lawyer for his defence shall be at the discretion of the court."

68. The Act further stipulates that, before taking any decision concerning a juvenile, the court must examine the report of the competent authority at the Ministry of the Interior and that of the probation officers in order to ascertain his state of health and the psychological and social circumstances which might have led to his delinquency or risk of delinquency.

69. In cases in which a juvenile is sentenced to a penalty other than a reprimand, the Juveniles Act permits either of his parents, his natural or testamentary guardian or the person responsible for him to lodge an appeal against the judgement with the competent court (arts. 37, 38 and 39 of the Act).

V. THE FAMILY ENVIRONMENT AND ALTERNATIVE CARE

Article 5

70. The State of Qatar has recently conducted information campaigns to stimulate greater awareness of child-related issues. These campaigns, which were designed and implemented at the national level, took into consideration the local culture and traditions under which parents and families have the right to provide their children with appropriate enlightenment and guidance based on the teachings of the Islamic religion, which frequently strike a balance between the rights of the child and the respective obligations of parents.

Article 9

71. With a view to meeting the requirements for the success of the educational process, and believing in the importance not only of strengthening ties between parents so that they can play complementary roles in the social upbringing of their children but also of the importance of an effective governmental contribution to raise the level of educational awareness in Qatari society, the authorities announced the formation of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs, the function of which is to formulate programmes and plans for the protection of mothers and children.

72. Within the framework of its endeavours to help parents to shoulder their responsibilities in regard to the upbringing of their children, the Ministry of Education has established at each of its schools a parents' council through which parents are regularly invited to the school for consultation on all matters concerning their children. The Ministry is also endeavouring, through these councils, to develop the educational awareness of parents in order to help them to assume

their responsibilities towards their children. In this regard, the Ministry is conducting a pilot experiment consisting in inviting parents to spend an entire school day with their children in their classrooms in order to obtain first-hand knowledge of the children's school life and activities. The Ministry has also taken a new step by allowing children to participate in the formation of a student's union, consisting of their elected representatives, in order to familiarize them with the exercise of democracy.

Articles 18, 19 and 20

73. The provisions of these articles were being applied in the State of Qatar even before the State's accession to the Convention, as already indicated during the review of article 8 of the Convention.

Articles 10 and 11

74. With regard to the rights of the child provided for in articles 10 and 11 of the Convention, an examination of the measures and provisions in force in the State of Qatar clearly shows that the rights of Qatari children in this connection are recognized under the laws and regulations in force and, in the case of non-Qataris, Act No. 3 of 1963, which regulates the entry and residence of foreigners in the State of Qatar, permits children to accompany and reside with their parents. Any child residing abroad far from his or her parents has the right to visit them if the child so desires. A number of recently promulgated legislative enactments have attempted to simplify the procedures under which foreigners working in the State of Qatar can be joined by their families in order to strengthen and promote family unification, as already mentioned.

Article 27

75. In keeping with the provisions of article 27 of the Convention, the laws of Qatar stipulate that, if a competent court orders a father to pay maintenance in respect of his child, the said order must be implemented by sending a copy thereof to the body by which the father is employed, if he is a civil servant, or, if he is not a civil servant, by seizing and selling his property in execution of the order.

Articles 20 and 21

76. The State of Qatar does not recognize the system of adoption referred to in article 21 of the Convention, as it is contrary to the provisions of the Islamic Shari'a. Children of unknown parentage are cared for by special institutions established for that purpose which are supervised and monitored by the Supreme Council for Family Affairs. Some voluntary organizations also show concern for foundling and orphan children and endeavour to find alternative families to care for them.

Article 25

77. In accordance with article 25 of the Convention, the State of Qatar recognizes that a child who needs special healthcare or treatment has the right to a periodic review of his or her treatment. Article 15 of the Juveniles Act No. 1 of 1994 stipulates that a juvenile must be placed

in a specialized health institution if the court finds that his condition necessitates medical care or treatment. The court monitors the juvenile's need for ongoing treatment at regular intervals of not more than one year, during which the relevant medical reports are submitted to it, and it must order his discharge if it finds that his condition so permits. On reaching the age of 18, a juvenile whose condition necessitates further treatment is transferred to the adult treatment department of the specialized health institution or to another health institution.

Article 39

78. Even before signing the Convention, the State of Qatar was showing due regard for the right of the child provided for in article 39 thereof, as is evident from the provisions of the above-mentioned Juveniles Act. Reference has already been made, during our review of article 37 of the Convention, to some of the measures taken in this connection. We wish to add the following:

79. The Juveniles Act attempted to ensure that its provisions covered two categories of juveniles:

(a) Juveniles at risk of delinquency due to:

(i) Their engagement in work that does not constitute a proper source of livelihood;

(ii) Their commission of acts associated with sexual or moral offences, offences against public decency or morals, the offences of drunkenness, gambling and begging, offences related to dangerous narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, or the offence of aiding and abetting in such acts;

(iii) Their frequentation of vagrants, suspects or persons well known for their reprehensible or immoral conduct;

(iv) Their repeated absconsion from home or from educational or training institutes;

(v) Their lack of a legitimate means of livelihood or reliable source of support;

(vi) Their defiance of the authority of their natural or testamentary guardian;

(vii) Their lack of a fixed abode or their habit of sleeping in the streets or in other places not intended for residence or overnight shelter;

(b) Juvenile delinquents who have committed a felony or a misdemeanour.

80. Juveniles who have been sentenced to one of the prescribed penalties are placed in social welfare centres, which have been established to provide them with appropriate physical, psychological, social and vocational care and rehabilitation with a view to their social reintegration.

81. Anyone who incites a juvenile to abscond from a social welfare centre commits an offence punishable under the provisions of the Act, article 24 of which stipulates that, without prejudice to any more severe penalty prescribed in other legislation, anyone who directly incites a juvenile to abscond from a social welfare centre or knowingly aids and abets in his absconsion therefrom is liable to a penalty of up to one year's imprisonment and/or a fine of up to 1,000 riyals.

82. It is also a punishable offence to expose a juvenile to the risk of delinquency, since article 25 of the Act stipulates that the penalty prescribed in article 24 shall also apply to anyone who exposes a juvenile to the risk of delinquency by training him to commit any of the acts referred to in article 1, paragraph 2, of the Act, by aiding and abetting therein or by in any way encouraging or facilitating his delinquent conduct, even if he does not actually become a delinquent. The penalty is a term of imprisonment ranging from six months to three years and/or a fine of up to 3,000 riyals if the offender subjects the juvenile to coercion or threats, even if he is one of the juvenile's ascendants, a person responsible for the juvenile's upbringing or welfare or a person vested with authority over, or holding legal custody of, the juvenile.

83. The purpose of all these penalties and measures provided for in the Act is to enable delinquent children to resume a normal life and reintegrate in society.

84. Although these measures for the benefit of children were taken before the State's signature of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, its accession thereto will motivate it to develop and strengthen these measures in future once the Supreme Council for Family Affairs has begun to formulate appropriate plans in this regard.

VI. HEALTH AND BASIC CARE

Articles 6, 18, 23, 24 and 25

85. The State of Qatar is diligently implementing the provisions of article 6 of the Convention, as is evident from the following.

86. Article 7 of the Amended Provisional Constitution (Basic Law) of the State of Qatar stipulates: "The family, which is rooted in religion, morality and patriotism, is the basis of society. The law shall regulate the means to protect the family from all elements of vulnerability, consolidate its structure, strengthen its ties and safeguard mothers and children within its bosom."

87. Article 159 of the Qatari Penal Code, promulgated in Act No. 14 of 1971, stipulates: "If a person under 15 years of age commits suicide, anyone who incited him to do so shall be liable to a penalty of life imprisonment."

88. Under the terms of article 170 of the said Code: "Anyone who deliberately aborts a pregnant woman with her consent, except with the good intention of saving her life, shall be liable to a penalty of up to five years' imprisonment". The provisions of this article also apply to a woman who provokes her own miscarriage or permits another person to do so.

89. Under article 171 of the Code: "Anyone who deliberately aborts a pregnant woman without her consent, except with the good intention of saving her life, shall be liable to a penalty of up to 10 years' imprisonment."

90. Under article 172: "Anyone who, through the performance of an act designed to abort a pregnant woman with her consent, except with the good intention of saving her life, causes her death shall be liable to a penalty of up to 10 years' imprisonment or, if the act was performed without her consent, to a penalty of up to 14 years' imprisonment."

91. Under article 173: "Anyone who assaults a woman and thereby unintentionally causes her to have a miscarriage shall be liable to a penalty of up to three years' imprisonment and/or a fine of up to 3,000 riyals."

92. Article 30 of the Prisons Act No. 3 of 1995 stipulates: "Enforcement of a death sentence passed on a pregnant woman shall be suspended until she gives birth. If her child is born live and she was sentenced to death under the lex talionis or as a fixed Qur'anic penalty (hadd), enforcement of the penalty shall be deferred until her child has been weaned. However, if the death sentence was imposed as a discretionary penalty, it may be commuted to a penalty of life imprisonment."

93. Under the terms of article 39 of the Prisons Act: "Pregnant prisoners shall receive the same treatment as prisoners in category 'A', if they are not already within this category, and shall be exempted from prison work. From the sixth month of pregnancy, they shall be accorded special treatment in regard to food and rest and shall receive medical care appropriate to their condition. They shall be transferred to hospital when the time of their delivery approaches and shall remain therein until discharged by the physician."

94. Article 40 of the Act further stipulates: "The enforcement of any disciplinary sanctions imposed on a pregnant prisoner shall be deferred until she has given birth or until her child is no longer with her, depending on the circumstances."

95. Under article 42: "The female prisoner shall retain her child until the child reaches the age of two years. If she does not wish the child to remain with her, or when the child reaches that age, the child shall be handed over to the father or to a relative chosen by the mother. A child who has no father or relatives willing to provide support shall be placed in a child welfare centre the location of which shall be notified to the mother, who shall be permitted to see her child at regular intervals in the manner specified in the Implementing Regulations."

96. Under article 174 of the Penal Code: "Anyone who, with the intention of killing an unborn child, commits a prenatal act that causes its death before or after its birth, except with the good intention of saving the mother's life, shall be liable to a penalty of up to 10 years' imprisonment."

97. Under article 175 of the Code: "Any father who endangers or leaves his child in any place with the intention of permanently abandoning the child shall be liable to a penalty of up to seven years' imprisonment."

98. The right of the child to life, survival and development is promoted by Act No. 17 of 1990, concerning protection from contagious diseases, article 15 of which stipulates: "Children shall be vaccinated periodically against the contagious diseases specified by the Minister. Such vaccinations shall be administered in accordance with the procedures and schedules specified by the competent health authority." Children may be vaccinated by a physician licensed to practise medicine, provided that the competent health authority certifies that the vaccination has been administered before the expiration of the specified deadline. The child's father or the person in whose custody or care the child has been placed has an obligation to take the child for vaccination. Under article 21 of the said Act, anyone who contravenes the above-mentioned provisions of article 15 is liable to a penalty of up to one month's imprisonment and/or a fine of 2,000 riyals. The Minister of Public Health promulgated Ordinance No. 4 of 1988 concerning the vaccination of children against certain contagious diseases.

99. The Ministry of Health is applying the stipulated procedures for the provision of health care to ensure the protection and development of children, as can be seen from the following.

Article 23

100. With regard to the right of the child provided for in article 23 of the Convention, disabled children in the State of Qatar receive appropriate care and assistance from the following government institutions and national voluntary organizations in accordance with an integrated plan designed to ensure that disabled persons enjoy optimal health, social and psychological care:

Government institutions providing care for disabled children

(a) The Supreme Council for Family Affairs, which is diligently formulating and monitoring plans in this regard;

(b) The Rumailah Hospital, which caters for the welfare and rehabilitation of disabled persons. Its Disability Department seeks to develop the child's physical and mental capacities to the maximum through training and education. The Department also provides rehabilitation services, including an integrated rehabilitation programme comprising medical, functional and developmental treatment, speech therapy, the manufacture of prostheses, social assistance and recreation and leisure activities. The same hospital also has a school that focuses on the special educational, therapeutic and recreational needs of children who are able to follow academic curricula;

(c) The Social Security Department of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs. This Department is establishing a special centre for disabled persons, since the State believes that it is important to provide them with suitable accommodation and living conditions. The Department also provides financial assistance for disabled children of both sexes, taking into

consideration the financial resources of their parents. In addition, it caters for the full physical and psychological development of disabled persons by organizing sports activities in which it encourages them to engage and for which it provides them with training;

(d) The Qatari Red Crescent Society. This Society, which was established in 1978, engages in various activities for the benefit of disabled children. For example, it has established a park for them, as well as a charitable fund to provide them with financial and in-kind assistance, and publishes a special magazine covering methods of care and other matters of interest to them. The Society also organizes health awareness campaigns to prevent and mitigate disability and designs and produces road safety posters to reduce the number of traffic accidents, which constitute one of the principal causes of disability;

(e) The Ministry of Education. The Ministry has opened four schools for the education and rehabilitation of children suffering from auditory and mental disabilities (two schools for each sex) which were attended by 304 disabled children during the academic year 1997/98. In addition to teaching basic education, the schools offer vocational rehabilitation in the fields of typing and secretarial work for children with auditory disabilities and in the fields of carpentry, upholstery, tailoring, dressmaking and housekeeping for the mentally disabled. In December 1997, on the occasion of the International Day of Disabled Persons, the Ministry opened the New Hope (Amal) Hospital, which was designed in the most modern style and is provided with all the equipment, appliances and apparatus needed for the teaching and training of disabled persons. In addition to teaching, training and rehabilitation, the Ministry offers disabled children recreational, health and educational services, organizes lectures, excursions and visits to historical and cultural sites and places of entertainment and arranges for disabled children to participate in various festivals with their able-bodied peers. All these services that the Ministry provides for disabled children are free of charge.

National voluntary institutions

(a) The Qatari Association for the Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled:

Since its establishment in 1976, this Association has been conducting a comprehensive survey and scientific classification of cases of disability in the country in collaboration with the competent government departments and institutions. It has also urged citizens to register all cases of disability. The Association is establishing the premises and institutions needed to accommodate and care for disabled persons, including children, and to provide them with education and vocational training appropriate to their individual circumstances. It also offers advice and guidance and is making the public more aware of the social and psychological problems of disabled persons and ways to prevent and deal with those problems. The Association operates a socio-cultural centre and an educational centre for disabled persons, as well as an information centre for their mothers;

(b) The Qatari Club for the Disabled:

This Club was established pursuant to Decision No. 1 of 1993, adopted by the Public Authority for Youth and Sports, to provide young persons, including those who are disabled, with training at all stages of their lives. The State has also promulgated a number of

legislative enactments exempting disabled students from payment of the cost of books and transport and of some dues payable by others, such as the airport tax imposed on persons leaving the country from Doha International Airport;

(c) The Shaffah Centre for Persons with Special Needs:

The aims of this Centre, which was established in 1998, include the following:

(i) Provision of health care, education opportunities, assistance and support services for children with special needs in order to enable them to use all their latent capabilities and capacities and become active members of society;

(ii) Promotion of public awareness of the nature of disabilities and the difficulties facing children with special needs;

(iii) Provision of assistance and training to enable families, teachers and specialists to aid and support children with special needs so that they can use all their latent capabilities and potential;

(iv) Helping schools to understand children's needs and encouraging teaching staff to cater for children with special needs;

(v) Training persons with special needs in occupations consistent with their capabilities and helping them to find appropriate employment opportunities;

(vi) Endeavours to secure the promulgation and development of laws and legislation emphasizing the need for the provision of appropriate special educational services for children.

Article 24

101. The State's health policy attaches great importance to preservation of the health of children so that they can grow up strong and healthy, enjoying full protection from the health dangers that threaten their present and future lives, particularly the dangers arising from affliction with lethal contagious diseases.

102. In view of the fact that appropriate health legislation plays an important role in the provision of child health care, the State has promulgated a number of legislative enactments to protect child health, as illustrated by the following.

103. Ordinance No. 4 of 1998, issued by the Minister of Health, introduced a comprehensive, integrated and highly effective system of compulsory vaccination against children's diseases. The vaccination programme covers children of pre-school age and vaccination against

viral hepatitis forms part of the extended vaccination programme. The health authorities are making a special endeavour to eradicate poliomyelitis by the beginning of the new millennium. As part of its pioneering preventive measures to protect children, the State of Qatar has included vaccination against haemophilus influenzae bacteria in its extended child vaccination programme, thereby considerably reducing the incidence of meningitis. The statistical indicators for the last few years show a notable decline in the incidence of contagious diseases and some diseases which are lethal to children have been eradicated.

104. The health authorities are making technical preparations for the introduction of a quadruple vaccine, comprising the haemophilus influenzae B vaccine with the triple vaccine in a single syringe, to avoid the need to inject children more than once in a single session. This will save time and effort and will make it easier for children and their families to obtain the vaccinations.

105. The State has also promulgated Act No. 5 of 1982 regulating the registration of births and deaths and Decree No. 19 of 1990 concerning the prevention of contagious diseases.

106. The Council of Ministers promulgated Decision No. 42 of 1992 approving the National Plan for Maternal and Child Care in the 1990s.

107. In actual fact, the health authorities have made numerous achievements in the field of protection of the rights of the child, as detailed below.

Statistical indicators

(a) Primary indicators:

(i) Child mortality:

108. A study conducted by the Ministry of Public Health in December 1987 showed that, as a result of the new preventive and therapeutic services provided by the State and the improvement in socio-economic standards, the infant mortality rate had declined from 37 per 1,000 at the beginning of the 1980s to 30 per 1,000 in the mid-1980s. By 1995 it had declined further to 12 per 1,000. Moreover, according to that child health study, the mortality rate among children under five years of age declined from 47 per 1,000 live births at the beginning of the 1980s to 37 per 1,000 in the mid-1980s. It has since declined further to 3.1 per 1,000 live births. These rates are lower than the targets set in the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s.

109. The proportion of premature births (children with a birth weight of less than 2.5 kg) ranges from 7 per cent to 8 per cent.

110. The statistics for 1997 show the following figures:

Number of live births	10 447
Infant mortality during the first week of life	53
Infant mortality during the first month of life	128 (12.3 per thousand live births)
Proportion of children born with a birth weight lower than normal (<2.5 kg)	8.3%

(ii) The maternal mortality rate:

111. Ninety-eight per cent of births take place in the Women's Maternity Hospital under skilled medical supervision. Accordingly, in the 1980s, there was only one maternal death in hospital, which was attributable to heart disease. There were no deaths in 1995. In 1996, the maternal mortality rate amounted to 9.6 per 100,000 births, no postnatal deaths being reported. The State is planning to maintain this situation in coming years through ongoing development of the comprehensive prenatal, perinatal and postnatal care provided for mothers.

(iii) The malnutrition rate:

112. The currently available nutrition indicators show that the nutritional status of infants is constantly improving. The proportion of children weighing 2.5 kg or more at birth amounted to about 92 per cent in 1991 and 91.7 per cent in 1997 and, therefore, exceeded the international target of 90 per cent. Health centres provide mothers with health advice and guidance concerning the importance of nutrition for the normal growth of their unborn children.

113. The Ministry of Public Health, in collaboration with the Hamad Medical Foundation, is making preparations for an evaluation of the nutritional status of children, and particularly children of pre-school age whose nutritional status requires more effective care and attention, as a basis for future plans and programmes.

(iv) Protection of children living in special conditions:

114. The Ministry of Public Health is catering fully for the needs of disabled children confined in hospital who are unable to attend the schools run by the Ministry of Education and also provides them with temporary care at home. In addition, the Ministry sponsors the activities of children's information festivals such as that recently organized by the Volunteers' Centre of the Qatari Diabetics Association with a view to informing the maximum number of children and their families of the dangers of diabetes and ways in which it can be prevented and treated.

(b) Sectoral statistics:

(i) Maternal health:

115. Maternal and child health-care services, which form part of the primary health-care services, are provided at the Women's Maternity Hospital, where the following types of health care are available:

Prenatal health care. Ninety-nine per cent of pregnant citizens and foreign residents receive prenatal health care, up to the thirty-second week in the case of normal pregnancies, at the health centres, abnormal cases being monitored by the Women's Maternity Hospital from the time of detection of any complications.

Perinatal health care. In the State of Qatar, 98 per cent of all births take place in hospital, thereby providing ample opportunities for the mother to receive the requisite perinatal care.

Postnatal health care. Postnatal health-care services are available at the Maternity Hospital and at the health centres that have been established in all parts of the State.

(ii) Nutrition:

116. The State, represented by its health institutions, is showing special concern for maternal and child nutrition, as illustrated by the regular public awareness campaigns and activities undertaken by the information media and the health centres concerning various aspects of primary health care for mothers and children and, in particular, the importance of proper nutrition for maternal and child health.

117. The Ministry of Public Health is making intense endeavours to promote breastfeeding and encourage its commencement immediately after birth. The Maternity and Child Department, in collaboration with the health authorities, has made plans to further promote breastfeeding and child-friendly hospitals. All commercial advertising of infant formula in the media has recently been halted and all marketing representatives have been strictly denied access to health centres and the Maternity Hospital. The child health study that was conducted as part of the Gulf Child Health Survey showed that 89 per cent of children are breastfed, some up to the age of three months and the others for varying periods thereafter.

118. The current indicators show that infant nutrition is excellent since, in 1991, the proportion of children weighing 2.5 kg or more at birth amounted to about 92 per cent, which exceeds the target of 90 per cent set in the World Declaration.

119. The nutritional status of 80 per cent of children attending school for the first time is appropriate, although greater attention must be paid to some who are under or above the normal weight for their age.

Child health

120. Four weeks after leaving the Maternity Hospital, children undergo the first periodic full health check-up at the Child Health Clinic run by the Maternity and Child Department, where their weight, height and occipitofrontal diameter etc. are measured. Their mothers are also provided with the necessary information concerning the vaccinations needed by their children, the schedule of which is noted on each child's vaccination card.

121. A special centre has been opened to receive and treat child emergency cases, which were previously dealt with at the Emergency Department of the General Hospital.

122. The principal achievements in this field are illustrated by the following indicators:

(a) Poliomyelitis was eradicated in the 1980s. From 1986 to date, the only case reported (in 1990) involved an immigrant. The statistics for 1994, 1995 and 1996 show no cases whatsoever;

(b) The incidence of measles declined from 1,275 cases in 1985 to 471 in 1990, 258 in 1991 and 31 in 1994 subsequently rose to 333 in 1995 and once again declined to 38 in 1996;

(c) The triple (diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough) vaccination and orally administered poliomyelitis immunization coverage increased from 68.9 per cent in 1988 to 81.5 per cent in 1990 and the measles vaccination coverage rose from 57.1 per cent in 1988 to 78.9 per cent in 1990;

(d) The tuberculosis vaccination coverage increased from 68.9 per cent in 1988 to 96.8 per cent in 1990 and the statistics show that the number of cases amounted to 120 in 1994, 193 in 1995 and 150 in 1996;

(e) Vaccination against viral hepatitis B was added to the State's extended vaccination programme on 15 October 1989. Qatar was the first Arab State to achieve a coverage rate of 81.9 per cent for the three doses in 1990 and, in 1996, the coverage rate for the first, second and third doses amounted to 94 per cent, 92 per cent and 90 per cent respectively;

(f) At the present time, vaccination of pregnant women against neonatal tetanus is not compulsory since no cases of that disease have been reported in recent years.

123. Anaemia is one of the principal diseases that affect children. It is attributable to bad feeding habits, use of infant formula and abuse of nutritional supplements. Bronchial infections and catarrh, particularly common colds and asthma, are among the main problems that account for the large attendance by children at hospital and health centre clinics.

124. From this review, it is evident that the State of Qatar is implementing an immunization programme comprising vaccination against tuberculosis, diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, poliomyelitis, haemophilus influenzae, viral hepatitis B, measles, German measles and mumps.

125. It is noteworthy that the State of Qatar was the first of the Arab Gulf States to include vaccination against viral hepatitis B and haemophilus influenzae in its vaccination programme, in 1989 and 1994 respectively. In 1997, the child immunization coverage was as follows:

Tuberculosis	99 per cent
Diphtheria/tetanus/whooping cough/poliomyelitis	First dose 95.1 per cent Second dose 93.6 per cent Third dose 92.4 per cent
Viral hepatitis	First dose 98.2 per cent Second dose 93.1 per cent Third dose 90.1 per cent

VII. EDUCATION, LEISURE AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

Article 28

126. Qatar provides primary education opportunities free of charge for all children over six years of age. These educational services are available to all students in all parts of the State.

127. The school environment is being developed and improved through the establishment of a larger number of modern facilities, such as school parks, swimming pools, multi-purpose activity halls, playing grounds and libraries, and the use of modern teaching methods, etc.

128. Educational and school working conditions are being improved by, inter alia, limiting the size of schools and classes, reducing the number of class periods per teacher and adopting the system of relief teachers.

129. The State is endeavouring to diversify secondary education by providing children with an opportunity to opt for the arts or sciences in general secondary education, in addition to industrial, commercial, religious and vocational secondary education. All types of secondary education are free of charge and the State pays monthly allowances to students enrolling in technical education in order to encourage them to enter this field of education.

130. On completion of their secondary education, successful students who have obtained the requisite grades in the final secondary-level examinations are given an opportunity to enrol for university education.

131. Since 1992, the Ministry of Education has been paying increasing attention to the university educational and vocational guidance and orientation programmes, including the plans formulated by the Ministry's Department of Social Education. The Ministry is paying particular attention to the school management system and is endeavouring to train school administrations to discharge their functions in the most efficient manner. On 8 May 1998, the Ministry organized a training course for secondary school deputy headmasters. The purpose of this course was to provide participants with the skills needed by successful deputy headmasters and to familiarize them with the problems that they might face in their work and ways to deal with those problems.

132. As part of its endeavours to ensure regular school attendance and reduce drop-out rates, the Ministry of Education frequently issues directives regulating these matters.

133. At the beginning of each academic year, the Ministry of Education forms school cultural, scientific, artistic and sports activity groups supervised by qualified specialists with a view to developing the personality and discovering and enhancing the skills and talents of students.

Article 29

134. The Ministry of Education in the State of Qatar is making every endeavour to familiarize children with the principles of human rights and freedoms set forth in the Charter of the United Nations through the academic curricula, the celebration of international events such as United Nations Day and educational competitions in which the highest-ranking officials in the

Ministry give students an opportunity to express their views and concerns regarding education, school curricula and teaching methods. For example, the Minister of Education in person has opened a dialogue with students in order to train them in debating techniques and encourage them to interact with him with a view to ensuring that the decisions taken are positive and beneficial to the educational process and their future working lives. A further step that has been taken consists in the formation of student unions at schools.

135. The Ministry of Education is endeavouring to disseminate the concepts of peace, tolerance and friendship among peoples. To this end, under the auspices of UNESCO, schools in the State of Qatar organized a peoples' cultural festival in the academic year 1995/96. A peoples' games festival was organized in 1996/97 and a tolerance festival is being planned for the current year.

136. The Ministry is encouraging schoolchildren to take part in various environment-related activities and school activity groups, known as "friends of the environment" groups, have been formed in many State-run schools to promote environmental awareness among students.

137. The Private Schools Regulatory Act No. 7 of 1980 makes provision for the licensing of private schools and specifies the conditions that must be met by their owners, headmasters and staff. The Act also specifies the requirements in regard to school buildings, facilities and records, student enrolment regulations and academic plans and curricula, as well as the investigative and denunciative measures to be taken if such schools violate any of the provisions of the Act or if they fail to meet the requisite educational standard.

138. In this connection, the Ministry of Education organizes debates and workshops on educational processes among the teaching and supervisory staff of government primary schools and Arab private schools at its Teacher Training Centre with a view to reconciling viewpoints concerning the planning of daily studies, with emphasis on analysis of their content, questions and teaching methods.

Article 31

139. With regard to the right of the child to rest and leisure, as provided for in article 31, the State of Qatar is making every endeavour to promote the welfare and safeguard the rights of children by providing all the facilities needed for the development of their personalities in a sound and physically and mentally balanced manner.

140. The State, represented by the Ministry of Education and the Public Authority for Youth and Sports, has shown great concern for this matter in accordance with the provisions of Decree No. 90 of 1990 establishing the Public Authority for Youth and Sports and the youth welfare provided for therein is promoted through the cultural and artistic activities and programmes organized by the Authority's clubs and centres. There are three specialized clubs:

(a) The Scientific Club, which comprises a children's section that seeks to develop the scientific abilities of children by providing them with all the means needed for the pursuit of their scientific interests, thereby helping them to acquire a scientific mentality;

(b) The Youth Hostels Association, established by the Qatari Supreme Council for Youth Welfare in accordance with the terms of its Constitution, the various activities of which include recreational and leisure programmes for children. The aim of the Association is to implement programmes for the establishment of camps, hostels and premises to accommodate young persons during their travels. The Association employs trained staff who supervise the implementation of all its programmes and activities, including:

(i) Organization of regular excursions to enable its members to visit the cultural landmarks and observe the developmental achievements in the State of Qatar;

(ii) Organization of journeys abroad so that members can participate in Arab and international work camps and programmes;

(iii) Holding of local children's festivals on various occasions, such as religious and national holidays, organization of competitions at which prizes are awarded and reception of children from other countries wishing to visit tourist and modern developmental areas in the State;

(iv) Organization of public service camps and formulation of programmes suited to each age group;

(v) Granting of individual cards to make it easier for young persons to travel abroad and stay in youth hostels at nominal prices, and organization of camps by the sea and inland with activities and programmes for children so that they can benefit from their leisure time during the summer holiday;

(vi) Organization of symposia, lectures and soirées to which experts on the problems of children and young persons are invited.

141. The "Friends of the Environment" Centre was established by the President of the Authority under the terms of Decision No. 116 of 1992. The aim of the Centre is to promote environmental awareness among young persons, familiarize them with the characteristics of the Qatari environment and its influence on social development and progress, encourage young persons to protect the environment from pollution, develop environmentally-friendly attitudes, skills and behaviour and train young persons to make joint endeavours to preserve the environment.

142. The Centre awards a prize (the "Friends of the Environment" Shield) to the school that is most successful in encouraging its pupils to participate in the Association's activities, disseminating environmental culture among them and mobilizing their minds and endeavours in favour of an environmentally-friendly attitude and competitive efforts to protect the environment and keep it clean, safe and healthy.

143. There are also three youth centres, nine sports clubs and the Al-Jasra Socio-Cultural Club. Part of the programmes and activities of these centres and clubs are intended for children, for whom halls are provided so that they can engage in cultural, creative and scientific activities

that help to develop their initiative and their innovative capabilities. Painting, wall magazine and other competitions are organized under expert supervision and various sports activities, competitions, events and festivals are also organized for children.

144. The State of Qatar is committed to the welfare and development of children as a religious, national and humanitarian obligation stemming from our spiritual and social beliefs and values and our local, Arab and Islamic aspirations. All the government sectors are endeavouring to create appropriate conditions for the proper upbringing of children in an atmosphere of freedom, dignity and humanitarianism.

145. Since radio and television are among the media which have the greatest educative influence on the lives of children and help to form their personalities and their social adaptability through numerous child-oriented programmes designed to teach and instil a personal sense of values, Qatari radio and television, in collaboration with various social institutions, are making great endeavours to foster and develop the perceptive faculties of children, promote their welfare and protection and make them aware of their universally recognized right to care and education. Schools at all levels help in the preparation of broadcasts for children which encourage them to read, emphasize the vital importance of education, promote social values and provide them with knowledge. On the occasion of local and international celebrations, Qatari radio and television, in association with various institutions, organize festivals devoted to the health, environment or culture of children and, in general, any aspects of their rights. There are also general programmes promoting conduct and standards that enable children to adopt socially acceptable modes of behaviour and play specific roles in society while, at the same time, making them more responsive to, and more willing to comply with, endogenous and exogenous rules of social conduct. By focusing on children's activities, these programmes endeavour to provide them with a dose of culture and teach the values and modes of conduct which they should adopt.

146. Through these programmes, children identify with their peers (beginning of social interaction), learn not to discriminate against others on grounds of race, language, religion or gender, make new friends, become more familiar with the situation and environment of children by asking questions and, by observing or participating in competitions, learn the merits of equality, justice and every child's right to win or succeed on the basis of his or her work and endeavours.

147. Many children have participated in radio and television programmes by writing letters expressing their views on certain family matters or explaining the positive and negative aspects of their relationship with their parents, their family, their school or their teachers and the various information media are attempting to shed light on some of the problems and concerns of children by interviewing them or quoting their letters.

148. There are programmes to discover the various talents of children, to provide them with proper guidance, to encourage them to pursue their hobbies and to promote understanding and encouragement on the part of their families and schools. Some children participate in the oral presentation of certain programmes, thereby furthering their aspirations and self-confidence. The children's programmes receive numerous letters from various countries containing

information, ideas and questions requiring replies. There are also magazines produced by children themselves. All this indicates the extent of the children's desire to participate in such programmes either by writing letters or by attending in person.

149. Through the production of children's programmes, the State is endeavouring to use them as an educational means to satisfy the various questions, desires and aspirations of children in a manner which shows due regard for all the social, educational and psychological components of the child's world. Moreover, in their children's programmes, the radio and television media do not neglect the disabled, who also participate in the programmes and are treated on an equal footing with their able-bodied peers.

Details of children's programmes broadcast on Qatar Radio in 1997

150. The latest annual statistics compiled by the Public Relations, Exchange and Research Department of Qatar Radio contain the following information.

151. In 1997, programmes intended for four categories (families, children, youth and nomads) were broadcast for a total of 799 hours 22 minutes, (i.e. 4 per cent of the total radio broadcasting time).

Radio broadcasts	Total broadcasting time of children's programmes	
	Hours	Minutes
Programmes	79	15
English programme	48	-
Urdu programme	24	11
Holy Koran programme	13	50
	165	16

152. The total broadcasting time of children's programmes on Qatar Radio during this period amounted to 165 hours 16 minutes, equivalent to 20.67 per cent of the broadcasting time devoted to programmes for the above-mentioned categories.

153. Children's programmes are broadcast on a regular basis every week and children participate in the presentation of 90 per cent of all the programme items broadcast. Special programmes for children are also presented on national and religious holidays, etc.

154. Children receive special attention not only through their weekly programmes but also through the daily family programmes, most of which focus on the upbringing and education of children, ways to deal with their problems and their interaction with their family and their environment.

155. The Radio covers various local, Arab and international children's activities, to which sufficient broadcasting time is allocated in its cultural, artistic and special programmes.

VIII. SPECIAL PROTECTION MEASURES

Articles 22, 38 and 39

Children in emergency situations

156. With regard to article 22 of the Convention, although the State of Qatar has not promulgated any national legislation regulating the status of refugee children, in principle it has no objection to the obligation to extend assistance to refugee children and to attempt to trace their parents if they are in Qatar or if the State has any information that might help the child in this connection.

157. With regard to the implementation of the provisions of this article, the State of Qatar has acceded to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War and the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, which clearly indicates the State's intention to honour its commitments under the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

158. With regard to enlistment in the armed forces, such enlistment is not compulsory in the State of Qatar, being based on the free will of the individual. The Armed Forces Act sets the minimum age for admission to the armed forces at 18 years, i.e. above the age specified in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

159. The State of Qatar showed due regard for this right of the child even before its accession to the Convention, as is clearly evident from the provisions of the above-mentioned Juveniles Act. During our review of articles 37 and 39 of the Convention, we have already referred to some of the measures taken in this connection. Since these measures in the interests of the child were taken before the State's accession to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, its accession thereto will undoubtedly prompt it to take further more effective measures in future.

Article 37

The effect of criminal justice systems on children

160. Children are protected under the provisions of the Penal Code and a number of other special enactments prohibiting prostitution, begging and vagrancy, etc., and also under the provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure concerning the trial of juveniles.

161. These provisions show due regard for the young age of juveniles, which justifies exemption from the penalties prescribed for offences that they might commit or the progressive reduction of such penalties in a manner consistent with the juvenile's degree of criminal responsibility.

162. The Qatari legislature has also promulgated other substantive legal provisions designed to protect children and juveniles from offences committed against them by adults, such as the offences of abduction and rape. Hence, the law affords protection not only for young persons

who commit legally punishable acts but also for children who are victims of aggression. In other words, the criminal law makes provision for the welfare of child offenders, as well as child victims of offences.

Rules concerning the protection of juvenile offenders

163. The rules governing the protection of juvenile offenders vary depending on the age (i.e. the degree of criminal responsibility) of the child or juvenile.

164. No child under seven years of age is held responsible, in any way, for any act that he or she might commit.

165. By law, children from 7 to 14 years of age are also exempted from punishment by virtue of their age but are liable to correctional measures such as a reprimand, delivery into the custody of a guardian, enrolment for vocational training, judicial probation or placement in a social reform centre or health institution, as stipulated in articles 7 and 8 of the Juveniles Act of 1994.

166. A juvenile over 14 but under 16 years of age who commits a felony or a misdemeanour is not liable to capital punishment, imprisonment with hard labour or flogging. A juvenile who commits a felony punishable by death or life imprisonment is sentenced to a term of not more than 10 years' imprisonment and, if he commits an offence punishable by a term of imprisonment or a fine, he is sentenced to not more than half the maximum legally prescribed penalty.

Rules concerning the protection of children from aggression

167. Qatari law contains special provisions to protect children from aggression in their capacity as persons requiring special protection due to their limited powers of perception and their inability to defend themselves or their honour or to resist enticement, corruption or the tendency to follow bad examples set by others. Offences against children include rape, detention, endangerment and incitement to engage in begging or prostitution or exploitation for purposes thereof.

Rules concerning protection in juvenile trial procedures

168. Article 28 of the Juveniles Act made provision for the establishment of juvenile courts vested with sole jurisdiction to hear cases involving juveniles accused of a felony or a misdemeanour.

169. Article 31 of that Act further stipulated that juvenile courts should sit in camera and their trials should be attended only by the juvenile, his relatives, witnesses, representatives of the competent authority at the Ministry of the Interior and probation officers in order to protect the juvenile from the psychological effects of mingling with crowds of litigants and the terrifying experience of appearing in an ordinary court.

170. The juvenile courts in Qatar are akin to social institutions by virtue of the substantive and formal aspects of their composition and their trials. Accordingly, article 33 of the

above-mentioned Act stipulates that, before adjudicating on a matter involving a juvenile covered by the provisions of the Act, the court must examine the report of the competent authority at the Ministry of the Interior, as well as the report of the probation officers, in order to determine the physical, mental, psychological and social circumstances that might have led to the juvenile's delinquency or risk of delinquency. To this end, the court may avail itself of the services of sociologists, experts and physicians.

171. The Act prohibits the remand in custody of suspected juvenile offenders under 12 years of age. If they are over that age and the circumstances warrant their detention, they are placed in a social welfare and reform centre for juvenile delinquents for not more than 10 years if they are convicted of a felony and not more than five years if they are convicted of a misdemeanour. If the juvenile suffers from a disability, he is placed in an appropriate rehabilitation institution. These stipulations are set forth in article 14 of the Act.

172. If the circumstances of the case warrant a preventive measure against a young person under 12 years of age, he may be delivered into the custody of a parent, a trustworthy person or a specialized welfare institution or shelter and the juvenile judge is responsible for monitoring the enforcement of the juvenile judgement by visiting the social welfare and vocational training centres and health institutions at least once every three months and by receiving their reports on the juveniles placed therein.

173. Juveniles who are deprived of their liberty serve their sentences in special institutions where they are separated from adult convicts. These institutions are equipped with the educational and correctional facilities needed to rectify deviant behaviour, enable the juvenile to utilize his capacities in various fields and keep him away from anything that would remind him of crime.

174. The standards of criminal justice set forth in article 40, paragraph 2, of the Convention are guaranteed by the Constitution of 1971, which is a general legislative instrument applicable to felonies and misdemeanours, including those committed by young persons.

175. These basic legal standards and principles are further detailed in the Code of Criminal Procedure of 1971, which stipulates, inter alia, that there is no crime except as defined by law and that everyone is presumed innocent until proved guilty. For example, the Code of Criminal Procedure stipulates that, if a young person under 15 years of age stands accused of a felony, the court must order his natural or testamentary guardian or the person responsible for his welfare to be present with him during all the proceedings in order to help him to defend himself and, if necessary, may appoint a guardian to assist him during the litigation (art. 64). Article 32 of the Juveniles Act further stipulates that a juvenile defendant must have a lawyer and, if he has not chosen one, the court has an obligation to appoint one to defend him at the State's expense. Under the said Act, a witness may be exempted from taking the oath in view of his young age or his inability to understand the meaning of the oath and the court may hear his statements as presumptive evidence. Under the terms of the Act, it is prohibited to compel a young person to give testimony or to confess guilt.

176. Under the Juveniles Act, a child or a child's guardian has the right to appeal, in accordance with the Code of Criminal Procedure, against judgements handed down by the

juvenile court. Such appeals may be lodged with a higher criminal court by the juvenile, his legal representative or the Department of Public Prosecutions unless the offence of which the juvenile stands accused constitutes a felony, in which case the appeal is lodged with the Court of Appeal (art. 39).

177. Although Qatari legislation does not make explicit provision for the child's right to have the free assistance of an interpreter, this falls within the discretionary power of the juvenile judge, particularly since article 43 of the Juveniles Act stipulates: "A juvenile shall not be charged any fees or expenses in respect of the court proceedings provided for under the terms of this Act."

178. The Act prohibits imposition of capital punishment, life imprisonment, imprisonment with hard labour or flogging on a juvenile. Under article 19 of the Act:

> "A juvenile over 14 but under 16 years of age who commits a felony or a misdemeanour shall not be sentenced to capital punishment or imprisonment with hard labour or flogging but, instead, shall be liable to one of the following penalties:
>
> (a) A term of not more that 10 years' imprisonment for the commission of a felony punishable by death or life imprisonment;
>
> (b) Half of the legally prescribed maximum penalty for the commission of an offence punishable by imprisonment and/or a fine."

In cases involving offences other than those punishable by death or life imprisonment, instead of the penalties prescribed in that article, the juvenile court may impose any of the measures, excluding reprimand and delivery into the custody of a guardian, provided for in article 8 of the Act.

179. In order to safeguard the interests of juveniles sentenced to penalties of imprisonment, such sentences are not served in prisons for adults but are served only in special governmental institutions, known as social reform centres, which accommodate and cater for the welfare, reform and rehabilitation of the juvenile delinquents placed therein by order of a juvenile court.

180. Article 8 of the Juveniles Act No. 1 of 1994 specifies the measures and penalties that can be imposed on juveniles, which differ from those to which adults are liable, as already explained in detail in this report.

181. With a view to preserving the human dignity of children, article 20 of the Juveniles Act stipulates that sentences imposed on juveniles must not be entered in their criminal record and, moreover, the penalties prescribed in the Penal Code or any other legislation are not applicable to them. In this connection, article 27 empowers a juvenile court to suspend all or part of the guardianship or custody rights granted by order of a competent authority in the following cases:

(a) If the guardian is sentenced, during his period of guardianship, to a term of imprisonment for a sexual offence or to 10 or more years' imprisonment for other offences;

(b) If the guardian endangers the juvenile's well-being or morals through ill-treatment or bad conduct;

(c) If the juvenile is placed in a social welfare centre in accordance with the provisions of the Act.

182. Under article 15 of the Juveniles Act, children deprived of their liberty have a guaranteed right to health care and are placed in a health institution if their condition necessitates medical care and treatment.

183. With regard to the child's right to a fair trial and to legal assistance, article 28 of the Juveniles Act stipulates: "The juvenile court shall be solely competent to hear the cases of juveniles accused of a felony or a misdemeanour or at risk of delinquency and to adjudicate in disputes concerning the enforcement of judgements handed down against them."

184. In order to safeguard the interests of juveniles during trials, the Act permits the court to sit in a social welfare centre for juveniles instead of the usual court premises. The Act stipulates that such trials must be held in camera. Out of respect for the juvenile's feelings and reputation, it also specifies the persons who are entitled to attend the trial.

185. Juvenile offenders are entitled to legal assistance under the terms of article 32 of the Act which stipulates: "A juvenile accused of a felony must have a lawyer. If he has not chosen a lawyer, the court shall appoint one for his defence, in which case the court shall assess the appropriate fees and pay them from the funds allocated for that purpose in the budget of the courts of justice. If the juvenile is accused of perpetrating a misdemeanour, the appointment of a lawyer for his defence shall be at the discretion of the court."

186. The Act further stipulates that, before taking any decision concerning a juvenile, the court must examine the report of the competent authority at the Ministry of the Interior and that of the probation officers in order to ascertain the state of health and the psychological and social circumstances which might have led to his delinquency or risk of delinquency (art. 33).

187. In cases in which a juvenile is sentenced to a penalty other than a reprimand, the Juveniles Act permits either of his parents, his natural or testamentary guardian or the person responsible for him to lodge an appeal against the judgement with the competent court (arts. 37, 38 and 39 of the Act).

Article 39

188. With regard to the provisions of article 39 of the Convention, the State of Qatar showed due regard for this right of the child even before its accession to the Convention, as is clearly evident from the provisions of the above-mentioned Juveniles Act. During our review of articles 37 and 38 of the Convention, we have already referred to some of the measures taken in this connection.

Article 32

Children in situations of exploitation

189. Article 41 of the Qatari Labour Act of 1962 prohibits the employment of juveniles without special permission from the Minister for Civil Service Affairs with the approval of the Minister of Education.

190. Under the Act, it is prohibited to employ children from sunset to sunrise, on days of rest or official holidays or for more than the normal working hours.

191. The Qatari Labour Act further prohibits their employment for more than six hours per day or 36 hours per week. Juveniles must not be required to work continuously for more than three consecutive hours and their working hours must be interspersed with one or more rest periods.

192. The purpose of the promulgation of these rules by the Qatari legislature was to protect children from economic exploitation or from engagement in any form of work that would expose them to danger, interfere with their education or harm their physical integrity, their health or their moral, mental or spiritual development.

Article 33

193. Pursuant to the provisions of article 33 of the Convention, the ultimate objective of Qatar's policy on narcotic drugs is to establish a society free therefrom. Qatar's policy in this regard is characterized by the adoption of preventive measures, since the aim of all the legislation promulgated by the State in this connection is to fully control the supply and circulation of such drugs. The Ministry of the Interior has a special anti-drug section which is responsible for carrying out the criminal inquiries needed to prevent illicit traffic in narcotic drugs, particularly in places where children are present.

194. The State of Qatar is a party to the three principal anti-drug Conventions:

(a) The Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961;

(b) The Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971;

(c) The United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988.

195. The State of Qatar ratified the Arab Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances under the terms of Decree No. 64 of 1995.

196. Qatar has also promulgated legislation which strictly regulates the use of, and traffic in, such substances, their use being restricted to health and therapeutic purposes. Anyone who violates this legislation is liable to severe penalties. These matters are regulated by Act No. 9 of 1987.

197. Although Qatar's schools have not reported any cases of addiction among children, in actual fact the State's research centres and academic bodies have recorded some cases of addiction, which were referred to the Ministry of Public Health's addiction treatment centre.

Article 35

198. The States parties are required to take all appropriate bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent the abduction of, the sale of or traffic in children for any purpose or in any form. In order to protect all persons, including children, the State of Qatar has promulgated legislation under which such acts are prohibited and punishable by criminal penalties. This legislation is illustrated by the following.

199. Article 193 of the Penal Code (Act No. 14 of 1971) stipulates: "Anyone who imports, exports, purchases, sells or possesses a person or acts as though he owned or possessed the said person shall be liable to a penalty of up to 10 years' imprisonment."

Article 34

200. Under article 194 of the Penal Code: "Anyone who sells, purchases, rents, hires out or in any other way acquires or disposes of a person with a view to employing or using the said person for purposes of prostitution or any other immoral or illicit purpose, or knowing that the said person would probably be employed or used for any of the said purposes, shall be liable to a penalty of up to 10 years' imprisonment."

Article 30

Children belonging to a minority or an indigenous population group

201. Article 30 of the Convention makes provision for the protection of children belonging to specific minorities.

202. In the State of Qatar, there are no ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin. Almost all the population of Qatar belong to a single ethnic group and the ethnic and linguistic minorities living in the State are regarded as immigrant labour holding temporary residence permits, although they enjoy all their rights during their period of residence in the State, including the right to education in their mother tongues and the right to engage in their religious observances.